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SCUTTLING ALONG A SPIDER'S WEB

Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis

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Metis ethnogenesis is an ill-defined process of cultural creation for those who study it, just as it was for those who lived through it. Accessing the process is hard because those who experienced it often did not do so deliberately or consciously, and few recorded the process for historians to discover. Ancestors of the Metis, both European and indigenous, did not have categories of ethnic and cultural identity that match with those in use today. Indigenous ancestors in particular organized their worlds through relationships with people, landscapes, and the spirits they called on for assistance and guidance to survive and flourish.¹ When scholars write about men in the fur trade, it is often difficult to distinguish who was French Canadian, Metis, Cree, or Ojibwe. We can try to discover where someone grew up, who their parents were, what languages they spoke, those with whom they traded, and where they chose to live and work. But are these things the actual ingredients of a cultural identity? Do they suffice in defining a particular identity? Moreover, why do historians care about defining a Metis identity and understanding its formation? Why attempt to describe the process of Metis ethnogenesis if it was meaningless or murky for the people who supposedly initiated it, performed it, and lived it?

We do so for three reasons. First, Metis communities across the north-west of North America have for generations celebrated their distinct culture, played Metis fiddle music, woven Metis sashes, spoken Michif, and waved the Metis flag, both literally and conceptually.² For these people and for their families, friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens, it is important to discern the beginnings of historical processes that, no matter how murky, later became defined, entrenched, and lived meanings of Metisness. The next two closely related reasons are that Metis people are politically recognized and their aboriginal rights affirmed in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 and the Supreme Court of Canada's 2003 decision to recognize the traditional harvesting rights of the Metis community of Sault Sainte Marie.³ Neither the government nor the courts have yet worked out who is legally considered part of "the people." We believe that scholars of Metis history have an obligation to contribute to this process of defining Metis historical roots. Today's land and comprehensive claims processes, with their need to clearly define territories, do not accurately reflect eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mindsets of fur trade communities and their inhabitants. Echoing jurist Jean Teillet, we argue that court decisions such as *R. v. Powley*, which advance definitions of the Metis as a rights-bearing group as long as they can show that they are a "group of people living together in a stable and continuous community in the same geographic area," distort the lived reality and historical experience of the Metis within the fur trade.⁴ We caution researchers and jurists against focusing too closely on territorial delineations and worry that current notions of nation, rooted to state and with clear concepts of territoriality, may come to dominate definitions of a Metis Nation.⁵ We must ask, What were historic Metis envisaging when they used the term *La Nation* or proclaimed "*Nous sommes la nation*" in the context of potential or overt conflict and confrontation such as the Battle of Seven Oaks (1816) and the battle against the Sioux at Grand Coteau (1851)? Were the Plains Metis referring to an older concept of a large-scale community based on extended kin lineages, reciprocal ties, and access and use of common resources, rather than abstract identities with central authority and clear territorial boundaries? We suspect their use of the term "*La Nation*" reflected a crystallization of self-identification and commonality attributable to a need to mobilize in specific circumstances of time and space.⁶ For example, the Battle of Seven Oaks (1816) was a collective defensive reaction to the activities of competing fur trade companies that

coveted trade routes and favored wintering sites at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers for their own colonial settlement projects. In the Grand Coteau battle (1851), the Metis asserted their right to access the lucrative bison herds and to participate in the plains-provisioning trade against competing players on the plains, notably the Sioux.⁷ Most inhabitants and descendants of fur trade communities did not need to mobilize in such fashion or take on an overt identification on a continuous basis, but we think they could have if they needed to.⁸ The current concept of territory does not reflect the political reality for Metis communities in the northwest, who were future members of La Nation, at least not until 1870, when Canada's Manitoba Act introduced provincial boundaries and requirements to formally apply for river lot ownership and scrip claims.⁹ Even in the 1869 and 1885 resistances, the Metis as a collective were primarily fighting for right of access—to bison herds, fishing grounds, and good wintering or gardening sites—and not necessarily individual plots of land to hold and own.¹⁰

In our attempt to describe Metis ethnogenesis, we consider those who worked in the fur trade in what became Canada's northwest. They came from the St. Lawrence valley, the British Isles, and the plains and boreal forests and have been identified as having French Canadian, Orcadian, Scottish, Cree, Ojibwe, Oji-Cree, Assiniboine, Blackfoot, Dene, Iroquoian, and Salish backgrounds. When European and Euro-Canadian men encountered indigenous societies, they traded with them and formed friendships and alliances with them, and sometimes children ensued from sexual unions. In some cases, the European and Euro-Canadian men and indigenous women formed long-lasting, stable unions, marrying *à la façon du pays* (in the custom of the country); their children married each other to form new and distinct communities and kin networks.¹¹ In this chapter, we attempt to put brackets around this murky process without pinning down individuals in one fixed and bounded category, instead tracing the movement of individual lives, loyalties, friendships, and kin ties. We argue that understandings of Metis-ness are distinct from other groups in the northwestern part of North America because the category of Metis was created from such a large variety of other ethnic groups and because, for the greater part of its history, it was not rooted to any particular place. The Metis carved economic niches within the fur trade as voyageurs and servants, as suppliers of pemmican, as freighters and trip men, as small traders and freemen, and as interpreters,

guides, and go-betweens.¹² Metis probably thought of themselves as part of a far-flung network of commerce, and they probably had a distinct view of the world as a vast, mobile, and interconnected territory, as opposed to being long-term farmers with clear-cut quarter sections or river lots, held for generations within a bounded community. Most Metis social locations (including those that featured farming in addition to work as trip men and buffalo hunters) were rooted to a mode of life that happened to be mobile—the mercantile world of the fur trade and its contact points in the continental interior. The ever-expanding fur trade's water and land routes became the geographic architecture for Metis ethnogenesis because Metis communities emerged around the constantly opening and closing fur trade posts. In addition, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Metis people generally moved westward to access new resources of fur, meat, fish, and fertile land to cultivate. In the midst of their migrations, both seasonal and permanent, they came to rely on kin and define themselves through kin networks.

Our metaphor for conceptualizing Metis ethnogenesis is a spider web, with finely spun connections of family, kin, and friendship obligations. Like spider webs, these connections were woven in surprising and complex patterns and multiple dimensions, could be hard to see, could be easily broken and re-spun, and yet were strong and durable. We take this metaphor from three distinct intellectual trajectories. First, Omushkego (or Swampy Cree) stories attribute the emergence of the first man and woman on the earth to the Giant Spider, or Ehap, who noticed the couple looking at a different dimension of life below them and admiring its beauty. Ehap offered to take them to that dimension by weaving a basket for them, and he lowered it down by spinning one of his strings. He warned the couple not to look down while they were being lowered or they would suffer a great tragedy. In all versions of the tale, the couple manages to resist looking down until they are close to their destination. When they look, some versions have them falling to the ground and hurting themselves, whereas other versions have them landing in a tree, where they are rescued by a bear, sometimes aided by a wolf.¹³ Like these first humans, we acknowledge that our scholarship can suffer if we analyze too early, before collecting our evidence, and stereotype or mislabel processes, or if we try to precisely define a moment of origin. Like Ehap's humans, we will never easily land on earth or be able to see clearly the progression and recognizable instances of Metis ethnogenesis.

We also seek guidance from another old soul, Clifford Geertz, who, in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), so eloquently agreed with Max Weber that humanity is suspended in webs of signification that it has, itself, spun.¹⁴ Rather than use the metaphor to designate strands of meaning in a web of culture or discourse, we view webs as material and emotional ties of kinship and loyalty.

We make similar use of postcolonial theorist Tony Ballantyne's work on Aryanism in the British Empire. Ballantyne used the metaphor of webs to transcend center-periphery models of empire and bounded models of nation-states. He outlined the advantages of a web metaphor to explain that empires were structures, complex fabrications fashioned from disparate parts and brought together in new relationships, and that the web metaphor "captures the integrative nature of this cultural traffic, the ways in which imperial institutions and structures connected disparate points in space into a complex mesh of networks." Like webs, empires are fragile and can be easily broken, yet they are also dynamic, "being constantly remade and reconfigured through concerted thought and effort." The web metaphor also emphasizes the horizontal linkages between colonies within empires, and it allows for the emergence of certain locales, individuals, or communities within the large web of empire as their own centers of intricate new webs.¹⁵ In this chapter, we likewise emphasize the multiple processes of initiation of Metis ethnogenesis, rather than a main center in the Red River settlement and a periphery of the West; we also emphasize that that traffic along the web of Metis kin networks moved in all directions. Connections formed among many of the small communities and extended families along the fur trade routes, and new regional centers such as Fort St. Joseph, Île à la Crosse, Lac la Biche, Batoche, Wood Mountain, and St.-Laurent, were constantly emerging. The dynamics of the fur trade, the plains-provisioning economy, and the freighting business all informed the webs of kinship and loyalty being constantly forged, broken, and re-made.

Scuttling Around the Web

Many studies of Metis have focused on fixed communities, such as the Red River settlement; St.-Laurent, Manitoba; Batoche, Saskatchewan; and Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.¹⁶ But some scholars have started to recognize the centrality of extensive migrations to Metis culture and history.

The Metis demonstrated their mobility repeatedly, in multiple ways, beginning with voyageurs moving westward from the St. Lawrence valley to work in the trade and continuing both with the migration of individuals and families from the Great Lakes region to the Red River valley in the late eighteenth century and with the slow westward movement across the plains from the Red River settlement that accelerated after the 1870s, when it was clear that Metis were losing out on the rights to land and compensation that they had won in the Red River Resistance of 1869–70.¹⁷ For example, Heather Devine's 2004 award-winning book, *The People Who Own Themselves*, traces the Desjarlais family across generations from France to New France, south to St. Louis at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, downriver to Louisiana, north to the Red River settlement, and west to the prairies of Alberta. Michel Hogue's recent doctoral dissertation, "Between Race And Nation: The Plains Métis and the Canada–United States Border," which explores the question of why Metis communities flourished in Canada but not the United States, highlights the incredible mobility of Metis people back and forth across the international boundary from the moment of its inception.¹⁸

In a recent article in *Manitoba History*, Nicole St-Onge speculates about the role of geography in situational identities, noting that "Red River Métis families involved in the gillnet fisheries may have shared a greater sense of affinity with their parkland Saulteaux [Ojibwe or Anishinaabe] fellow fishermen than with the nearby trading and freighting Métis elite of Saint-Boniface [Winnipeg]." She contends, "There is a growing consensus among scholars that the key spatial expression of Métis life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was mobility. The Métis economy included the harvesting of meat, fish and other country produce, but it was also based on trade and transport activities. This kind of economy resulted in spatial organization along networks of travel between specific locations for a variety of purposes."¹⁹ Hence, we see Metis communities participating in annual or biannual buffalo hunts, organizing large-scale seasonal fisheries, and traveling together in small hunting bands, and sometimes returning to a home base, such as Mackinac, the Red River settlement, Île à la Crosse, or St-Albert. But rather than being tied to particular communities that sprung up among the fur trade routes, they were instead tied to communities of kin and attracted to the economic and social opportunities that these geographic points offered. Kin webs and economic ties coincided in those areas. When economic opportunities abated,

such as when the fur trade declined at Mackinac or the bison herds receded farther from the Red River settlement, the webs of kin found other locales with new economic opportunities. These webs of kin were not rooted to a tangible place, except in a very large sense—the Great Plains region, nearby parkland, and the boreal forests to the north. But we also see new home bases being established all the time, as Metis people moved west to find new land to cultivate, to follow the fur trade posts to continue selling country produce, and to follow the buffalo herds as they shrank and moved farther away from the march of pioneers in the young republic to the south.

The people from mixed origins who coalesced into these far-flung, mobile fur trade communities descended from kin-based (and often clan-based) societies that were also experiencing an accelerating history of mobility. From the eighteenth century on, more and more Scots were forced to emigrate by changing economic and social circumstances. Many of these migrants from the Scottish Highlands entered the fur trade and brought their clan alliances with them.²⁰ Colin Calloway observed that both

Highland and Indian society revolved around clan and kinship . . . The Gaelic term *clann* meant children or family and implied a kinship group that claimed descent from a common ancestor. Blood ties between a clan chief and his people might be mythical rather than actual, but the assumption of kinship represented an emotional bond. Kinship bound people together in Native American societies, but there too it often had more to [do] with social relations than with biological connections, governing conduct between individuals and distribution of resources.²¹

In both groups, clan leaders were expected to act for the good of their people. The similarities between Highlands and many Indian groups extended beyond clans: “They lived in tribal societies with a strong warrior tradition, they inhabited rugged homelands, and they were accustomed to deprivation and inured to hardship.” Both Highlanders and Indians also lived as tribal people on the edge of an empire that spanned the Atlantic, and their identities were forged by often-bitter experiences with British colonialism and English cultural imperialism.²²

Of course the parallels between Highlanders and Indians can only go so far. Whereas the Highland Scots constituted a single ethnic group with a common culture and language who inhabited a relatively small

homeland, Indian societies were numerous, possessed tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity, and inhabited a vast continent. Highland clans were feudally organized, clan chiefs had considerable control over members of their clan, and clans organized land distribution and defense, whereas Native American leaders rarely wielded the power, paraphernalia, or economic leverage of Highland clan chiefs.²³ And yet these similarities were strong enough that they shaped Highlander and Indian encounters and encouraged cultural mixing and intermarriages.²⁴

The author Douglas J. Hamilton made the intriguing argument that Scots in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century successfully adjusted to an ever-expanding Atlantic World by adapting what could be considered their seemingly archaic and increasingly obsolete clan system. As Hamilton explained,

To make the transition from a Scotland in a state of flux to a Caribbean beset by enormous challenges, Scots drew on the support and patronage of their networks. These groupings were, at their most fundamental level, based on precisely the kind of social relations within kinships that had characterised Scottish society for generations. More significantly, these apparently archaic forms of social relations, under attack at home, were adapted to provide the springboard for Scottish influence in what was regarded as a truly modern imperial enterprise. . . . As a result of the activity of the networks, the Scottish–Caribbean interaction emerges as a dynamic and symbiotic relationship, as an underpinning of the Atlantic World as a transnational world of exchanges.²⁵

These networks must have fused with Indian clan and kin systems when the two groups met in the fur trade and must have contributed to the base of the extensive networks among Metis families.

In an earlier but parallel study, Christian Morissoneau observed that French Canadians from the St. Lawrence valley held family ties, even across vast continental distances, to be the most important characteristic of their consciousness. He explained that theirs “is a homeland writ small, a movable homeland, and it provides a basis for solidarity . . . and negates geography. Thus the people preserve their identity through their very instability.”²⁶ French Canadians, like their Scottish counterparts, went into the interior in search of work and money and, sometimes, the quest for a better life. Between the 1700s and the early 1830s, over 34,000 fur trade contracts were signed before Montreal notaries by men eager to work in

the “upper country” writ large.²⁷ Some might remain only one season, others a handful of years, and still others spent the balance of their lives in the North American interior.²⁸ Over the decades, a mercantile network was constructed and maintained across a broad crescent of interconnected waterways from Montreal to Michilimackinac, to the Red River settlement, to the Fort Des Prairies along the Saskatchewan River, farther north to the subarctic, to St. Louis, and finally to New Orleans. United by language, religion, and diffuse but very real webs of actual and fictive reciprocal kin obligations, this French River World endured and prospered into the nineteenth century.²⁹ Metis kin networks grew out of these Scottish and French Canadian familial and clan traditions, and the networks also incorporated indigenous kin and clan networks to adapt and create a unique web well suited to life in the Great Lakes, the Great Plains, and the northwestern boreal forests.³⁰

Although kinship has not received the attention it deserves in the writing of North American indigenous history, Raymond J. DeMallie asserted that kinship is of central importance to understanding indigenous peoples, explaining, “Kin terminologies, descent and inheritance systems, marriage and residence patterns all combine in the family to shape the texture and dynamics of daily life, and serve as the foundations for Native American societies.” He proposed that kinship is not simply a model for understanding social relations among families and tribal members but extends “to include the relationship of human beings to all other forms of existence in a vast web of cosmic interrelationship.”³¹ Robert Alexander Innes took up DeMallie’s challenge to place kinship front and center by infusing kinship into our understanding of the indigenous people living in what became the northwest of Canada. In his work on the Cowessess First Nation in southeastern Saskatchewan, Innes found that kinship practices explain how this community came to be composed of Plains Cree, Saulteaux (western Ojibwe), Assiniboine, and Metis.³²

Traders, both European and indigenous, were born into a fluid and mobile fur trade world where the smallest hunting camps and outposts were connected to global systems of trade and alliances over vast geographic expanses through extended webs of kin as well as economic, social, and cultural activities that bound people together. Bethel Saler and Carolyn Podruchny recently used the metaphor of a Russian nesting doll to envision the interconnectedness of the many spatial scopes of the fur trade, ranging from the macro views of global and hemispheric trade

networks to discrete company geographies and regional and local trading realms.³³ In the nineteenth century, this fur trade world was both widening and shifting westward in geographic and demographic terms. Montreal and Michilimackinac were slowly declining centers, whereas Fort Chipewyan and York Factory (especially after 1821) were ascending.³⁴ Given these kin or tribal structures' roots in a mercantile economy based on cross-cultural linkages and exchanges across vast swaths of the North American continent, it would be an error to see them as anachronistic. They were adaptive to the social, cultural, and geographic challenges faced in the North American interior. In the same vein, the mode of life necessitated by successful Metis economic pursuits of freighting, plains provisioning, and trading in the North American interior encouraged the preservation and adaptation of kin-based networks inherited from both the maternal and paternal sides. In her examination of Indian men and French women in the western Great Lakes, Susan Sleeper-Smith found that the French Catholic kin ties, often expressed through godparenting, combined with the kin structures of indigenous people to produce a widespread kin network and collective identity that subsumed individuality, incorporated mixed-ancestry offspring, and facilitated the expansion of the fur trade.³⁵ Likewise, Tanis Thorne's study of Metis along the Missouri River, Diane Payment's account of the Batoche Metis along the South Saskatchewan River, and Brenda Macdougall's description of the Metis at Lac Île à la Crosse in northwestern Saskatchewan, to name a few examples, demonstrated a shared worldview that linked family, identification, self-understanding, and commonality into webs of connectedness.³⁶ The need for these ties may have been reinforced by the increased mobility and greater horizons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the North American interior. The Metis were born into a world where a degree of reciprocity and group cohesion was necessary. Beyond the logistics of bridging the sheer distances involved and the logistics of the economic endeavors pursued, there were competitions among fur trade companies, clashes with competing Indian bands, epidemics, famines, and struggles for access to bison herds, fishing grounds, and wintering sites. Metis cohesion within the fur trade was necessitated by the internal dictates of trading and plains provisioning and by the ever-present possibility of external competing interests and potential threats.

So, how should we view the contours of this emerging people? In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Metis people were defined by their

links to the fur trade; by networks of connectedness formed while working in the fur trade; by commonalities and relatedness formed in families; by inherited appreciation of family, kin, and clan structures; and by their mobility. Certainly some appearances of stability, in the form of fixed places, appeared in the northwest. Mackinac, Fort William, Red River, La Loche, Lac la Biche, and French Prairie were examples of geographical rootedness to a site, and many of these endure to this day. But these examples of geographical rootedness can give a false impression of physical stability. People within these communities moved within and between these and myriad other places, from large farming settlements to mobile hunting camps to temporary winter camps. Both their economy and culture encouraged this mobility, which became one of their prime societal markers. Such societal markers certainly could exist within neighboring ethnic and occupational groups, such as Cree middlemen and Iroquoian voyageurs, but what made the Metis distinct were the particular combinations of occupational ranges and patterns of mobility.

One could characterize the Metis as a variety of groups that drew on mixed heritage in different ways in a wide range of circumstances. But among this range of communities and families emerged a sense of commonality and eventually a sense of collectivity to survive, produce, and reproduce in an environment of immense human, physical, and socio-economic flux. They came from (to use Calloway's words) tribal peoples both on the European and the Indian side. They recreated vast networks of real or fictive kinships that they could call on for help and support while maintaining the high degree of mobility required by the fur trade economy. Places like the Red River settlement provided stability to support the movements and chain migration within the Red River families and kin networks. Even those who were born and died at Red River were mobile. This mobility becomes obvious when life histories and family genealogies are reconstructed. Children were often born away from the Red River settlement in wintering sites, at other trading posts, or on the buffalo hunt. While working in the fur trade, Metis servants were left alone or in groups to winter, hunt, fish, or work in families or clans like the Delorme, Desjarlais, or Parenteau. These kin groups maintain to this day an enduring presence in communities such as the Red River settlement, but a great number of their members moved along the fur trade links to Batoche, La Loche, English River, and Fort Chipewyan. To understand the

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Metis, locale is less important than webs of kinship.

Ehap's Humans and Their Kin

In addition to seasonal migrations to follow resources and progressive westward migrations in search of new opportunities, a third type of migration pattern further complicates the tracing of Metis ethnogenesis: the movement of individuals in and out of different social and economic situations and in and out of different identifications, categories, and lifestyles. In this section, we briefly explore the lives of four people, three of whom were descended from Indians and Europeans and one who was descended from Europeans but was highly influenced by Indian kin. All four of these people lived in the northwest and moved in and out of various contexts and identities: Marie Madeleine Réaume L'archevêque Chevalier (ca. 1710–1780), Joseph Constant (1773–1853), Charles Racette (ca. 1804–1881), and Johnny Grant (1833–1907). We assess their reliance on kin networks and how mobility shaped their lives.

Our first example is an eighteenth-century Great Lakes woman who used kin connections to construct elaborate, powerful, and far-flung fur trade networks but remained rooted to a single place. Marie Madeleine Réaume L'archevêque Chevalier was the daughter of an Ilini woman, Simphorose Ouaouagoukoue, and a French Canadian father, Jean Baptiste Réaume, who worked as an interpreter for the French Crown at Fort St. Joseph on the south-eastern shore of Lake Michigan and Green Bay on the west side of the lake. Susan Sleeper-Smith provided a detailed sketch of Chevalier's life based on "baptismal and marriage registers, reimbursement records kept by fort commandants, letters and petitions written by her husband, and references made about her and her children in the letters of French and British officials."³⁷ At twenty-four, Chevalier married Augustin L'archevêque, an Illinois Country fur trader. Over the next fifteen years, she gave birth to at least four daughters, all of whom survived to maturity, and a son who probably did not reach adulthood. Her first husband died when Chevalier was in her thirties, and at forty-one she married Michilimackinac trader Louis Thérèse Chevalier.³⁸ Chevalier spent most of her life at Fort St. Joseph, a life fully shaped by the fur trade: she was the daughter of a fur trader and married two fur traders, and her five daughters also married fur traders. Mobility characterized

her life not through migration or livelihood but, rather, through kin networks.

Marie Madeleine Réaume L'archevêque Chevalier's adult identity was defined by the ever-expanding Catholic kin network of the fur trade, which extended north of Michilimackinac, west to Green Bay, east to Montreal, and south to Cahokia and St. Louis.³⁹ She expanded and solidified kin networks by choosing godparents for her children. She chose Iliniwiik women or her own daughters to serve as godmothers to her children. Each godfather, however, was French: the fort commandant, his sons, and an interpreter. Only for her last child did she select a godfather of mixed ancestry.⁴⁰ She dramatically increased her kin connections when she married Louis Thérèse Chevalier. One of her daughters married one of Louis's brothers, whereas another daughter married Louis's Montreal business partner. Other members of Louis's family married Winnebago women, and the merger of these two families integrated and extended their kin connections in many directions.⁴¹

By the mid-eighteenth century, as the French population at Fort St Joseph dramatically declined, the Pottawatomi, her kin, and her trading partners increasingly came to define Chevalier's world. About twelve hundred Potawatomi lived near or at the post, and several hundred Miami lived in an adjacent village.⁴² By 1760, all but one of her children had moved to larger fur trade communities, but they all frequently returned to Fort St. Joseph to have their own children baptized or to serve as godparents. Chevalier expanded and adjusted her kin networks as her circumstances and environment changed. Sleeper-Smith explained, "Marriage served as a planned extension of kin networks, Catholicism further extended those linkages through fictive kinship, and mobility extended that kin network throughout the western Great Lakes."⁴³ Although Chevalier stayed in a single place, she manipulated her kin connections to move among different communities to trade.

In later times and places, she might readily have identified as Metis. But a crucial question is, What made her Metis? Can we know whether she thought of herself and her family as Metis, or as distinct from the Indian and French people living around her? It is clear that she operated successfully in multiple worlds, which included Illinois, Pottawatomi, Miami, and French.

Our second example, Joseph Constant, also shaped his life around opportunities in the fur trade, relied on his large family, and moved in

and out of various contexts to follow economic opportunities. He was more geographically mobile than Chevalier, relocating from the Great Lakes to the Canadian northwest and eventually settling near The Pas in what is now northwestern Manitoba. Joseph Constant left many traces in the documentary record, and we have a fairly clear picture of the broad contours of his life.⁴⁴ Born to a French Canadian voyageur father and an Ojibwe mother in the western Great Lakes region, Constant followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a voyageur in the Montreal-based fur trade. Constant worked mainly for the North West Company (NWC) as a voyageur, but he quickly rose to prominence as a foreman in the trade through his skill in guiding and interpreting, as he spoke French, English, Cree, and Ojibwe, and possibly other aboriginal languages. The NWC hired Constant to spy on the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), but Constant became a double agent, spying on the NWC for the HBC. Constant used his position as a spy to develop a widespread independent and covert trading operation, a clear violation of his terms of employment with both companies. When Constant either quit or was fired from fur trade service, he opened his own provisioning post with his Ojibwe wife and children near Cumberland House, north of Lake Winnipeg. Constant and his sons continued to perform short labor contracts and trade with the HBC after its merger with the NWC in 1821, and the family also sold provisions to explorers and missionaries who traveled through the area. He developed a trade network with neighboring Ojibwe and Cree communities, thanks to his wife's relatives and through the ties he had developed while working as a voyageur for the large trade companies. In addition to trading salt, sugar, tea, tobacco, pots, and other goods, the Constant family also hunted, fished, and cultivated grains and vegetables to sell at its post.

Like much of the northern plains and woodlands, the region north and west of Lake Winnipeg was a multiethnic environment. By the 1820s, Cree hunting groups and a minority of Ojibwe, Metis, and freemen inhabited the area around The Pas. Some Ojibwe families moved to the Saskatchewan River as part of larger westward and northward migrations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴⁵ Cree and Ojibwe communities engaged in similar lifestyles, living in small hunting parties for most of the year and travelling according to seasonal cycles to make use of resources on their land. They began to intermarry in the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ Significant numbers of retired French Canadian,

Metis, and, to a lesser extent, Orkney fur trade servants settled in the area and frequently acculturated into Indian communities.⁴⁷ Many lower Saskatchewan Cree accepted the increasing numbers of freemen in the area, developing good relations with them.⁴⁸ In the early years of the nineteenth century, Ojibwe, Cree, Metis, and freeman groups began to form mixed bands. Although these groups were beginning to compete with each other for resources, the complex web of kinship ties allowed them to combine their strengths.⁴⁹ Although The Pas coalesced as a multiethnic community, its members had similar lifestyles. The extended family remained the most important social and economic unit, and community members hunted, traded, gardened, and participated in the Midewiwin and Wabano, the Algonquian spiritual organizations most common among the Ojibwe.⁵⁰

Constant's children became prominent members of the multicultural communities in the area. Two sons became leaders in the Midewiwin, and his descendents were Cree signatories of Treaty 5 with Canada. We cannot know how Constant thought about his own ethnic identification, but we do know that his fur trade employers, the Roman Catholic missionaries who converted him and his wife, and the Anglican missionaries who converted several of his children referred to Constant by a wide variety of labels, including Canadien (which meant a French-speaker from the St. Lawrence valley), Metis, Ojibwe, and Cree. However, he was most often called a freeman, which was a man who quit the fur trade service to live independently in fur trade country, residing neither at posts nor in aboriginal communities. Constant most likely had flexible self-identifications, self-understandings, and loyalties and adapted to changing economic and social circumstances to secure the optimal security and prosperity for his immediate family.

The quintessential French Canadian freeman (and one of the most famous) was Charles Racette, who called himself the Lord of Lake Winnipeg.⁵¹ Although he was not descended from Indian and European parents, Racette's life closely resembled those of Metis. He and his children lived in the Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba area, moving in and out of economic and social situations in search of prosperity. Racette was born in 1765 or 1773 in the parish of St. Augustin, just west of Quebec City along the St. Lawrence River. He entered the fur trade by at least 1790, joining a Michilimackinac-based group of Nipigon traders. We can be certain Racette's parents had managed to provide him with an education because he entered the service as a youthful clerk rather than a

paddler. His start as a clerk probably explained his disdain for “common labourers,” but he shared their language and probably suffered discrimination from Scottish and English bourgeois, especially when Racette worked on short-term labor contracts as a guide and interpreter. In the late 1790s, the HBC hired Racette to establish a post on the upper Red River. This venture failed because the Orcadian English-speaking servants, who could not understand the French-speaking Racette, refused to work under his authority. Some years later, Racette tried again to work within the confines of a large company, this time for the NWC, whose work force was primarily francophone. He procured several hundred pounds to establish a post near Grand Portage, but this venture failed as well. Disillusioned with working for companies, he began to trade on his own in the 1790s. By 1807 he was living as a freeman with his family on the west side of Lake Manitoba, near Fort Dauphin, while continuing to work informally for the NWC.

Racette began a family in the northwest in the last years of the eighteenth century, when he would have been either twenty-five or thirty-two. He married a woman of Ojibwe descent—referred to in the records as Josephte Sauteux, who would have been about twenty—and had at least five children with her between 1787 and 1824. Josephte, or “Mother” Racette, is regularly mentioned in sources as an active part of the family enterprise. She traded regularly with fur trade companies and probably trapped with her husband.⁵² After this time, Racette began to refer to himself as the “lord of Lake Winnipeg.”⁵³ Like Constant, Racette moved in and out of a variety of circumstances to find the best economic opportunities for his family, and he eventually settled on living as a freeman.

Some scholars, particularly John Foster and Heather Devine, consider the category of freeman as a part of Metis ethnogenesis, specifically the proto-generation of Metis. In his classic article “Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Metis,” Foster argued that the ethnogenesis of the Metis required a two-step process. The first was the wintering of an outside (European) male with an Indian band, which led to the outsider’s marriage to a prominent Indian woman and the formation of close bond with adult Indian males, while still maintaining close bonds with the male outsider (European) fur traders. The second step involved the outsider male leaving the fur trade service, or “going free”—living apart from both the fur trade post and the wife’s Indian band—and establishing bands of freemen and their families. The

freeman relied on kin ties with Indian people and economic ties to fur trade companies to exploit economic niches in the fur trade. The social milieu of these freeman bands, which drew on but were distinct from European trading posts and Indian bands, created the circumstances for new cultural forms to emerge, and these were reinforced when the children of freemen married one another.⁵⁴

Heather Devine built on Foster's work by closely tracing the lives of Dejarlais family members who joined the fur trade as servants and later left to become freemen in the Lesser Slave Lake region of Athabasca (now northern Alberta) in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Like Foster and Jennifer S. H. Brown, Devine emphasized that children of mixed parentage followed trajectories shaped, in large part, by the social and cultural environment in which they were socially enmeshed, and that collective experiences lay at the root of Metis ethnogenesis.⁵⁵ She showed that even within one family, children could take dramatically different paths that shaped their economic fortunes and cultural identities. Three Desjarlais men born in the St. Lawrence valley in the mid-eighteenth century, brothers "Old Joseph" (b. 1754) and "Old Antoine" (b. ca. 1760) as well as their relative François, entered the fur trade service with various Montreal partnerships as young men. But by the early 1800s all three lived as freemen. Old Joseph and Old Antoine fathered mixed families with their Ojibwe wives, forming a loosely connected band and prospering as fur traders, with Old Joseph based at the east end of Lesser Slave Lake and Old Antoine becoming master of the post at Lac La Biche.⁵⁶ Two of Old Joseph's known five sons, Baptiste (b. 1790) and Antoine (b. 1792), illuminate the range of options open to this first generation of mixed children. Antoine became the main interpreter at the HBC post at Lesser Slave Lake, and he cultivated ties with his relatives in the St. Lawrence valley via his uncle Old Antoine. Baptiste, on the other hand, was first employed at the HBC post as a hunter then later supplanted his brother as post interpreter. He then supplanted his step-brother Tullibii as the local trading chief and cultivated ties with his Ojibwe kin, seeking spiritual power and switching to his Ojibwe name, Nishecabo.⁵⁷

Brenda Macdougall built on the work of Foster, Brown, and Devine by closely tracing the emergence of a Metis ethnicity in one place: the region around Lac Île à la Crosse in northwestern Saskatchewan. She followed forty-three Metis family groupings over five generations, from 1800 to 1912, starting from the French and Scottish fathers and Cree and Dene

mothers, which she termed the “proto-generation.” She found that Metis children took their fathers’ last name but resided in the homelands of their mothers’ families. This first generation of Metis children began to intermarry with each other and root themselves to the Lac Île à la Crosse region. Other individuals and families entering the region attached themselves to this core group, and this pattern of territorial intermarriage continued for at least two more generations.⁵⁸ The identity of the Metis in this region was based on family, relatedness, kin obligation, and interconnections within and among communities, all encompassed in the Cree term of relatedness, *wahkootowin*, adopted by these Metis to assert their prime social marker.⁵⁹ The Metis families in the region asserted their economic freedom, and especially their independence from the HBC, first by becoming freeman (with limited and occasional contracts with the HBC) and then by becoming free traders (independent operators trading solely for personal profit). They treated the HBC as a member of the family, relying on it for a variety of needs (investing savings, dispensing rations, and providing housing). But when the HBC failed to act as a good relative, putting profits ahead of the interests of Metis family members, the Metis turned away from the HBC to other family members to meet their economic needs.⁶⁰ For Macdougall, the key to Metis ethnogenesis lies in the idea of relatedness or *wahkootowin*. The work of Foster, Devine, and Macdougall provide parallel contexts in which to view the development of kin networks and communities that coalesced around Joseph Constant and Charles Racette; these men can be understood as the proto-generation of Metis, and we hope that more scholars will devote the same detailed attention to their families and regions as have Devine for the Desjarlais and Macdougall for Île à la Crosse.⁶¹

Johnny Grant, our fourth example of an individual Metis negotiating an identity in a variety of places throughout his life, was born in 1833 at Fort Edmonton. His grandfather William Grant was a Scottish-born Montreal and Trois-Rivières merchant. The community of Trois-Rivières was located in the St. Lawrence valley, a region with very deep roots to employment in the fur trade economy. William Grant “of Three Rivers,” as the grandfather became known, was part of a large and active fur-trading family focused on the Michilimackinac Great Lakes trade. William’s wife, Marguerite Fafard Laframboise, was the daughter of a prosperous Trois-Rivières merchant named Jean Baptiste Fafard Laframboise. William’s son, and Johnny Grant’s father, Richard Grant, was a HBC trader raised

in Trois-Rivières. Johnny Grant was therefore born on his father's side to the dual French and British fur-trading elite of Lower Canada. These ties were reinforced after the death of Johnny's mother, when Richard Grant took him back to Trois-Rivières to be raised by his paternal grandmother until the age of seventeen.⁶² Johnny's mother was a Metis woman, Marie Anne Breland, the daughter of Pierre Breland and Louise Umfreville. Here again the ties into the Metis world ran deep, especially in the vicinity of the Red River settlement and Fort Edmonton. Pierre Breland was a hunter and free trader along the Saskatchewan River who eventually moved with his family to the Red River settlement.⁶³ By 1832, Maria Anne's siblings resided in Grantown (St. Francois-Xavier), continuing the tradition of freighting, trading, farming, and bison hunting. They were considered one of the well-to-do and well-connected families of Red River.⁶⁴ Marie Anne was also partially raised by her stepfather, John Rowand, who was chief factor of Fort Edmonton from 1823 to 1854.⁶⁵ Several of John Rowand's sons and his daughter married into prominent Metis families and became active in the northwest fur trade. Johnny Grant considered all these relations and their descendants to be part of his kin network.

If the vertical webs of kin ran deep, Johnny Grant also ensured that horizontal lines of kinship and mutual obligations were quickly in place. In the 1850s, a few years after his return to the northwestern Great Plains, Johnny Grant struck out on his own and became a free trader in the vicinity of Fort Hall, Idaho, where his father was stationed. There, he married his first wife, a Shoshone woman, who helped cement his trading ties to her band. As Gerhard Ens noted, this was the beginning of a recurring theme for Johnny Grant. He had relationships with at least four different native women who bore him at least a dozen children in the Montana/Idaho region. These kinship connections ensured good relations with the various Indian groups and enhanced his trading relations.⁶⁶ After making and losing several fortunes, he sold his ranch in Deer Lodge, Montana, and relocated to the Red River settlement. Prior to leaving, he sent a letter to John Rowand, Jr., his mother's half-brother, and asked whether he could bring his family to the Red River settlement to live near them. Rowand was dead by that time, and so the reply came from the Hon. John McKay, who was married to Margaret Rowand, Grant's mother's half-sister. It was McKay who told him to come up with his family.⁶⁷

There is no evidence that Grant was in Red River prior to his initial scouting mission in the late 1860s, when he spent three months visiting

with different kin and acquaintances, renewing friendships, and making new ones. He also organized the move of his large family and entourage, returning to Montana to fetch them.⁶⁸ When Grant finally set out for Red River, he led sixty-two wagons, twelve carts, and five hundred horses, two hundred of which were his. There were 106 men plus numerous women and children. Some of these people were heading "to the States," but many followed Grant to Red River settlement.⁶⁹ He used his tried-and-true strategy for securing a place in a community by immediately marrying Clotilde Bruneau, the Metis daughter of a judge in the Red River Colony.⁷⁰

Grant lived in the Red River settlement from 1867 to 1892, standing apart from those Metis who opposed Canadian annexation and participated in the 1869 resistance. Grant instead supported Canadian officials and amassed another fortune in land speculation following the exodus of many Metis families further west after Manitoba's entry into Canadian Confederation. By 1882, Grant owned 13,000 acres of land, a substantial two-story house, and a large herd of cattle at Rivière aux Ilets des Bois (today the site of Carman, Manitoba).⁷¹ Although Grant worked hard to become a member of the new commercial elite in Manitoba, he was not successful. He eventually lost his land, his home, and his cattle through unpaid debts and changing herding laws. Grant moved west to Alberta to start over as a homesteader and fur trader but with little success. He died in 1907 with little to his name.⁷² Even if Grant was primarily a rancher throughout most of his life, his extended family illustrates the centrality of fur trade networks in creating patterns of economic opportunities and mobility, and these patterns were very easily adapted to an open-range ranching lifestyle.

Gerhard Ens described Johnny Grant as representative of many Metis traders and merchants in the last half of the nineteenth century: men who were able to amass wealth and property working as intermediaries between Native economies and incoming European-based capitalism. Success depended on their ability to move easily between Indian worlds and European settlement, using interpersonal and intercultural skills in the trade of furs and cattle. However, as Indians became dispossessed and their economies plummeted after the rapid demise of the buffalo, many Metis entrepreneurs could not adapt to the new capitalist environments, which required standardized management, accounting, planning, and knowledge of contracts and corporations. Furthermore, they lacked financial connections and access to capital in central Canada.⁷³

Throughout his life, Grant fluctuated among a variety of identifications, including Euro-Canadian, Metis, and Indian, depending on which was most economically and socially advantageous.⁷⁴

Some of the examples discussed above show that the development of Metis identifications and communities could be grounded in a region with core foci. Marie Madeleine Réaume L'archevêque Chevalier rooted her life and extensive kin network at Fort St. Joseph, though the family ties ranged throughout the Great Lakes basin. Joseph Constant, born in the Great Lakes region, eventually made a life and created a community on the north shore area of Lake Winnipeg. The family of Charles Racette gained prominence in the Interlake region of present-day Manitoba. Brenda Macdougall eloquently showed how the Metis community at Île à la Crosse was specific to that place. Macdougall explains,

What makes the northwest truly compelling is that it is home to one of the oldest, most culturally homogeneous Metis communities in western Canada, a community of people who grounded themselves in the lands of their Cree and Dene grandmothers by adhering to a way of being embodied in the protocols of *wahkootowin*. The Metis family structure that emerged in the northwest and at Sakitawak [Lac Île à la Crosse] was rooted in the history and culture of Cree and Dene progenitors, and therefore in a worldview that privileged relatedness to land, people (living, ancestral, and those to come), the spirit world, and creatures inhabiting the space. . . . Identity, in this conceptualization, is inseparable from land, home, community, or family.⁷⁵

The locus for this community was clearly Île à la Crosse, though community members, especially men, moved throughout present-day northwestern Saskatchewan and northern Alberta, pursuing various economic opportunities. But even these regions may not have been particularly fixed, for they expanded, shifted, and contracted over time, depending on economic resources and possibilities. The nuclear unit may or may not have been especially mobile, but the larger web of kinship was diffuse and shifting, responding to new opportunities or socioeconomic pressures.

Mobility came in many guises. Although it could mean individuals and families moving around a great deal over varying distances, it also meant mobility in alliances and family connections as well as socioeconomic mobility and the constant search for new sources of livelihood. More often than not, the Metis themselves viewed it as a combination of

all three. Yet, in whatever guise, this mobility was both anchored in and defined by expansive kinship networks rooted in the fur trade's innumerable trails and waterways. The multiple webs, both tangible and obscure, were made manifest by those who came to be called Metis. Although the people themselves may only have used collective terms such as Metis or La Nation in the nineteenth century when forced to deal with external and often hostile entities, they understood their unique position within multifaceted geographic, economic, social, and ideological networks. They lived a Metis life even if they did not have the need, time, or inclination to articulate it out loud or brand it with a label.

Gathering the Strands

The stories in the previous section lead one to wonder what was particularly Metis about the extended webs of kin and relatedness and the multiple guises of mobility. The same patterns could be found among other ethnicities, such as the Cree, Ojibwe, Assiniboine, and Dene on the northern plains and woodlands of what would become Canada's west. The Metis themselves lived in mixed bands. As early as 1988, J. R. Miller suggested that "the artificial barrier between Métis and Indians should be obliterated."⁷⁶ In his study of the history of the Cowessess First Nation, Innes noted that both the close relations from intermarriage and the similar cultural features among the Metis and Plains Cree, Assiniboine, and western Ojibwe (or *Saulteaux*) provide ample reasons to question both racial and cultural definitions of Metis.⁷⁷ Definitions of Metis that rely on the ingredients of hunting buffalo, practicing Roman Catholicism, speaking French, and wearing woven sashes imply that Metis cultural traits are static, exclusive, and singular, thus precluding cultural change and the creation of diverse ranges of Metis cultural expression (such as speaking Metif, Bungee, or English; practicing Anglicanism or Presbyterianism; and wearing tailored suits). Innes suggested that Metis ethnicities become more apparent when viewed from a band rather than tribal level.⁷⁸ We argue that a generalized vision of Metis-ness can be derived from the myriad of specific examples of Metis community and individual histories that have been published in the last twenty-five years. Metis are distinct from neighboring communities because of the sheer size of the area over which they traveled, lived, and worked; their emergence out of the fur trade; their close economic relationship to mercantile capital; their reliance

on fur trade networks in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and cultural practices passed down over generations. All these factors combine to give shape and coherence to their kin-structured communities.

Evidence suggests that Metis ethnogenesis in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the northwest of North America was a singularly adaptive manifestation with a particular twist—the Metis used webs of kinship to succeed in an ever-expanding mercantile economy. The Metis represent not only an enduring form of organizing one's larger social, economic, and political world through webs of real and imagined kin, but one that could be fashioned and refashioned to meet eighteenth- and nineteenth-century realities. In these centuries, imperial trans-Atlantic economies consolidated and expanded, requiring ever-lengthening lines of secure communications and exchanges. Concurrently, emerging nation-states carved out territories, hardened their borders, and introduced national "state" categories of identification. Yet, all the while, groups variously termed classes,⁷⁹ tribes, peoples, and nations endured and adapted by transcending these national and state identifications. French Canadians, Scots, Metis, and the interior Indian tribes all survived, at least for a time, by proactively adapting older forms of social organizations, which allowed for stability through long-term and far-flung webs of reciprocity. These forms of social organization could endure even in situations of frequent mobility. As with other multicultural bands, the Metis web allowed for the incorporation of outsiders—including new Indian bands or incoming fur trade employees—via marriage and fictive kin practices such as god-parenting and adoption. The fur trade world certainly lent itself to such "stable mobility" with the regular back-and-forth movements of goods and people along its river routes and cart trails. The very emergence of fur trade mercantilism allowed old forms of tribalism or claniship to adapt and serve as a means of prospering and eventually creating a new people. The Metis were unique among other multicultural tribes because they embraced the opportunities that the expanding capitalist system provided. The rise of capitalism did not obliterate old forms of social organization but, rather, allowed the Metis to survive and refine themselves. In turn, the fur trade business needed the Metis as experienced suppliers, entrepreneurs, laborers, and middlemen in order to function effectively.

The concept of the fur trade world as constituted of webs and nodes, with people deriving from it their self-understandings and social locations through kinship ties, is a compelling one. Places like Red River or

Mackinac are important nodes in part because of their undeniable physical attraction in terms of geographic location and economic nexus, but also because of the webs of kinship that ran thick through them. Johnny Grant, after finally deciding to leave Montana, took his kin and entourage to the Red River settlement, a place he had never been, because he knew that the settlement offered both economic opportunity and a network of kin. Although he had never met his Red River settlement relatives, he knew that they would help him settle and take up his usual economic pursuits of ranching and trading. Webs as mental spaces and physical realities could be resilient and robust. On the ground, the “Northwest” was continuously being redefined. Western geographic centers, such as Red River, Fort Edmonton, Fort Chipewyan, Rocky Mountain House, and Fort Astoria, eclipsed eastern geographic centers, like Mackinac, Grand Portage, and Fort William. Equivalent social centers, like the forged ties of kin, alliance, and friendship between and within Metis communities, were also being continuously renegotiated as new Indian tribes were incorporated into the fur trade, populations moved farther west to follow bison herds, and old routes were abandoned and new ones opened, with attendant new trading posts. Continuous influxes of people were brought into the fur trade kin network not only from European arrivals and the interior Indian tribes, but also from eastern Indians who moved west to take advantage of trading opportunities. Many Iroquois from the Seven Fires communities⁸⁰ joined the fur trade as voyageurs, and at various points in time they comprised a tenth of the fur trade labor force operating out of Montreal. Some of these Iroquoian voyageurs settled in the northwest, and their communities have lasted to the present day.⁸¹ This web of relatedness that spun Metis ties to one another, like the fur trade, was remarkably resilient.

Identifications based on expansive and extensive webs of kinship enabled Metis people to endure, survive, adapt, and prosper in changing, fluid, and sometimes hostile environments. This form of social adaptation and societal arrangement was a viable mechanism to maintain necessary social and economic cohesion over vast distances, in a milieu of merchant capitalism, and mingling with multiple cultures, societies, and economies. It was an effective basis for a group identification that could transcend local and regional ties and allow for economic pursuits predicated on mobility to flourish and, in turn, reinforce the far-flung kin-based structures. Being Metis and being part of a Metis world—whether one formally labeled oneself as such or not—was an intrinsically adaptive

social construct given the conditions prevalent in the nineteenth-century fur trade world. Obviously the contours of this identification ebbed and flowed given specific conditions in specific moments and places. In some cases, internal and especially external pressures hardened Metis identification into a national militant category that used a clear us–them discourse. As Gerhard Ens suggests elsewhere in this volume, it occurred in Red River at specific times for specific reasons, but, for the *longue duree*, Metis identification was an embedded and adaptive category that incorporated or co-opted individuals rather than pushed them out.

Notes

We thank the following people who read either parts of or the whole chapter and provided guidance and information: Chris Andersen, Jennifer S. H. Brown, Richard Connors, Erin Dolmage, Timothy Foran, Douglas Hunter, Kathryn Magee Labelle, and Brenda Macdougall.

1. For a discussion on the instability of the term “identity,” see Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity.’” Also see Albers, “Changing Patterns of Ethnicity.” Blanche Cowley-Head, a member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, told Carolyn Podruchny that descendents of the Constant family did not focus on ethnicity or tribal affiliation. She explained that people did not ask whether they were Ojibwe, Cree, Oji-Cree, French, or Metis; rather, people emphasized both that they lived and flourished around the fur trade post of Cumberland House—and later the community of The Pas in northern Manitoba—and that families and community grew and members supported one another (Blanche Cowley-Head, personal communication to Carolyn Podruchny, 23 October 2008).

2. For examples, see the Gabriel Dumont Institute at <http://www.gdins.org>, and especially their Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture at <http://www.metismuseum.ca> (accessed 13 October 2009).

3. On the *Powley* decision of 2003, see “*Powley* Case: Fulfilling Canada’s Promise, Métis Nation of Ontario,” at http://www.metisnation.org/harvesting/Powley_Case/legal01.html (13 October 2009), and Reimer and Chartrand, “Documenting Historic Metis in Ontario.”

4. Teillet, “Metis of the Northwest,” 1–8.

5. In this chapter we recognize that Metis people lived in the Pacific Northwest and the northern subarctic, but we draw most of our examples from the northwestern boreal forest, prairies, and Great Lakes region.

6. For a discussion of the emergence of diverse forms of nationalism in pre-state contexts, see Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders”; and Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*. For a discussion of the term “identification” used in lieu of “identity,” see Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” 14–21.

7. On the Battle of Seven Oaks, known to many Metis as la Victoire de la Grenouillère, or the Victory of Frog Plain, see Dick, "Seven Oaks Incident." On the Red River Metis and the lure of the buffalo hunt, see Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 35, 38–43, 72, 75–76. On Sioux and Metis conflict, and occasional peace negotiations, see McCrady, *Living with Strangers*, 11–13, 19–27, 76–85.

8. And sometimes the overt identification was imposed from the outside, such as when mixed-blood employees in the post-1821 Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) could not advance their company careers beyond the lowest ranks. See Judd, "Native Labour and Social Stratification."

9. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*.

10. We note, however, that many Metis practicing agriculture along rivers in the Red River settlement became concerned about their property to some degree. We suspect they used fences to keep livestock out of the crops, not to keep property in. On the chaotic system of land tenure in the Red River settlement in the 1830s, see Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 30–35.

11. For the classic works on the relations between male fur traders and indigenous women, see Brown, *Strangers in Blood* and Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties." Recently, some scholars have effectively traced the emergence of Metis families in specific locations, such as Macdougall for Île à la Crosse, Saskatchewan, in *One of the Family*.

12. For examples of the range of Metis economic activities, see Ens, "Dispossession or Adaptation?"; St-Onge, "Variations in Red River"; Devine, *People Who Own Themselves*; and Foster, "Plains Metis."

13. Bird, *Telling Our Stories*, 81–82; Bird, *Spirit Lives in the Mind* 15–17; and Scott, "Where the First People Came From" and "Arrival of People Here on Earth at the Very Beginning."

14. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 5. Also see Vibert, *Traders' Tales*, 4, 6–7.

15. Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*, 14–15.

16. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*; Payment, *Free People*; St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba*; and Murphy, *Gathering of Rivers*.

17. On voyageurs and their extensive travels, see Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*. On the westward migrations of the Metis, see Ens, *From Homeland to Hinterland*, 14–15, 73, 77, 80, 92, 111–12, 114, 117–22, 139, 154, 170–72.

18. Devine, *People Who Own Themselves*; and Hogue, "Between Race And Nation."

19. St-Onge, "Uncertain Margins," 2–3, 4.

20. On the Highland traders and their clans, see Calloway, *White People, Indians, and Highlanders*, 23–28, 118–46.

21. *Ibid.*, 7.

22. *Ibid.*, 8–10; quote from p. 9.

23. *Ibid.*, 8–10.

24. On Highland Scots becoming dominant in both the HBC and the Montreal-based companies, as well as in the upper echelons of the HBC after its merger with the North West Company (NWC), see *ibid.*, 120–21. As for Highlander fur

traders marrying Indian women and having mixed-blood children, see *ibid.*, 156–74.

25. Hamilton, *Scotland, Caribbean and Atlantic World*, 221.

26. Morissonneau, “The ‘Ungovernable’ People,” 28.

27. Nicole St-Onge, “Tracing the Voyageurs: Understanding the Background to the Métis Nation and Métis Homeland—Voyageur Contract Database Project,” University of Ottawa and the Saint-Boniface Historical Society, 2002–2009. The Voyageur Contract Database Project has collected approximately 34,000 voyageur fur trade contracts signed mostly in Montreal between 1700 and 1830. The original copies of the contracts are on microfilm at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ) and the St-Boniface Historical Society in Manitoba. The contracts have been digitized in a comprehensive database at http://shsb.mb.ca/en/Voyageurs_database. It is currently the largest organized collection of fur trade contracts. Also see Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*.

28. St-Onge “Early Forefathers to the Athabasca Metis.”

29. Englebert, “Beyond Borders.”

30. Sleeper-Smith, “Women, Kin and Catholicism.”

31. DeMallie, “Kinship,” 306.

32. Innes, “Elder Brother” and “Importance of Family Ties.”

33. Saler and Podruchny, “Glass Curtains and Storied Landscapes.” Also see Slattery, “Our Mongrel Selves.”

34. Fur traders and Great Lakes Metis communities were not the only ones shifting westward. See Bowes, *Exiles and Pioneers*.

35. Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 42–44.

36. Thorne, *Many Hands of My Relations*; Macdougall, *One of the Family*; and Payment, *Batoche and Free People*.

37. Sleeper-Smith, “Furs and Female Kin Networks,” 54.

38. *Ibid.*, 56; and Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 46–47.

39. Sleeper-Smith, “Furs and Female Kin Networks,” 54; and Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 45–49.

40. Sleeper-Smith, “Furs and Female Kin Networks,” 56; and Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 46.

41. Sleeper-Smith, “Furs and Female Kin Networks,” 58; and Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 48.

42. Sleeper-Smith, “Furs and Female Kin Networks,” 55.

43. Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*, 50.

44. For an overview of Constant’s life, see Podruchny, “Un homme-libre se construit une identité.”

45. Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, 14–18. Also see Berens, *Memories, Myths and Dreams of an Ojibwa Leader*; and Innes, “Multicultural Bands on the Northern Plains.”

46. Honigsmann, Rogers, and Taylor all have asserted that language was the most important trait that distinguished the Swampy Cree from the northern Ojibwe and have claimed that their cultures were similar. Steinbring commented

on common patterns of intermarriage between Cree and Ojibwe in the nineteenth century. See Honigsmann, "West Main Cree," 217; Rogers and Taylor, "Northern Ojibwa," 231; Steinbring, "Saulteaux of Lake Winnipeg," 245; and Smith, "Western Woods Cree." Paul Thistle found that a group of American Indians referred to as Bungees began to immigrate to the Cumberland House area in the 1780s and 90s, although he has argued that they were Swampy Cree rather than Ojibwe (Thistle, *Indian-European Trade Relations*, 69). Laura Peers also maintained that the closure of fur trade posts after the 1821 merger increased the number of Ojibwe trading at Cumberland House (Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, 102). For a good discussion of assessing identity at the band level in this region rather than the tribal level, see Innes, "Multicultural Bands on the Northern Plains."

47. For example, see Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey*, 48, 85.

48. Thistle, *Indian-European Trade Relations*, 73.

49. Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, 69; Innes, "Multicultural Bands on the Northern Plains"; and Albers, "Changing Patterns of Ethnicity."

50. James Hunter to the Secretaries, Rivière du Pas, 9 September 1845, Church Missionary Society (CMS), C.1/M.4, reel A-78, pp. 7, 37. In the summer of 1840, Reverend Henry Budd reported on a Midewiwin celebration at the Grand Rapids (John Smithurst's Journal, 25 December 1839 to 31 July 1840, 16 July 1840, CMS C.1/M.2, reel A-78, p. 517). Reverend James Hunter described another on 29 May 1848 (Rev. James Hunter's Journal, Cumberland, 9 April 1848–31 July 1848, CMS C.1/M-4, reel A-79, pp. 477–79).

51. For an overview of Racette's life, see Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 294–95.

52. George Nelson's Journal, 3 November 1807–31 August 1808, 14 May 1808, and 22 May 1808, pp. 31, 34, Baldwin Room, S13, Metropolitan Reference Library, Toronto; George Nelson's Journal, 1 September 1808–31 March 1810, entitled "Journal for 1808 &c &c &c," 14 September 1809, in *ibid.*; George Nelson's Journal, 1 April 1810–1 May 1811, 9 July 1810, in *ibid.*; George Nelson's Journal and reminiscences, 1 December 1825–13 September 1836, entitled "St. Jude, Dec 1st 1825," p. 82, in *ibid.*; and Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 15 July 1817, p. 276.

53. George Nelson's Journal and reminiscences, 1 December 1825–13 September 1836, entitled "St. Jude, Dec 1st 1825," p. 82, Baldwin Room, S13, Metropolitan Reference Library, Toronto, ON.

54. Foster, "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male."

55. Devine, "Les Desjarlais," 130. Also see Foster, "Some Questions and Perspectives," 82–87; and Brown, "Diverging Identities," 204.

56. Devine, "Les Desjarlais," 133–40; and Devine, *People Who Own Themselves*, 76–91.

57. Devine, "Les Desjarlais," 135–40.

58. Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 17–20.

59. *Ibid.*, 6–8.

60. *Ibid.*, 215–16, 213–39.

61. We hope for more examples like Campbell, *Halfbreed*; Belcourt, *Walking in the Woods*; and Wishart, *What Lies Behind the Picture*?
62. Ens, "Introduction," p. x.
63. Grant, *Son of the Fur Trade*, 1; and Ens, "Metis Ethnicity," 164–65.
64. For example, one of her brothers, Pascal Breland, married Maria Grant, daughter of the settlement's founder and "warden of the plains," Cuthbert Grant (Grant, *Son of the Fur Trade*, 1).
65. Rowand's second country marriage was to Lisette or Louise Umfreville, likely Marie Anne's mother, who had separated from Pierre Breland prior to 1812 (ibid., p. xlvii).
66. Ens, "Introduction," 165.
67. Grant, *Son of the Fur Trade*, 135–36.
68. Ibid., 152–64.
69. Ibid., 170; Ens, "Introduction," p. xiv; and Ens, "Metis Ethnicity," 167–68.
70. Grant, *Son of the Fur Trade*, 180–84; and Ens, "Metis Ethnicity," 168–69.
71. Ens, "Introduction," pp. xiv–xxxiii; and Ens, "Metis Ethnicity," 168–71.
72. Ens, "Introduction," pp. xxiii–xxxix; and Ens, "Metis Ethnicity," 172.
73. Ens, "Metis Ethnicity," 172–73.
74. Ens, "Introduction," p. vii; and Ens, "Metis Ethnicity," 161–64, 174.
75. Macdougall, *One of the Family*, quote on 3, but also see 23–50, 241–42.
76. Miller, "From Riel to the Metis," 17.
77. See also Patricia K. Sawchuk, "Historic Interchangeability of Status," and Joe Sawchuk, "Métis, Non-Status Indians."
78. Innes, "Multicultural Bands on the Northern Plains."
79. Leon, *The Jewish Question*. Leon sees the Jews as constituting a "people-class."
80. Descendents of the Wendat (Huron), Abenaki, Algonquin, Nipissing, and Five Nations Iroquois settled in seven communities along the St. Lawrence valley: Wendake, Odanak, Wôlinak, Pointe-du-Lac, Khanawake, Kanasatake, and Akwesasne. These became known as the Seven Fires. See Sawaya, *La Fédération des sept feux*.
81. On Iroquois voyageurs, see Grabowski and St-Onge, "Montreal Iroquois Engagés"; Karamanski, "Iroquois and the Fur Trade"; and Nicks, "Iroquois and Fur Trade."

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